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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at William Rainey Harper College (WRHC) to provide institutional data about student performance over time. The study involved an analysis of transcript data on a random sample of 200 full-time and 200 part-time beginning credit students who entered the college from fall 1972 to fall 1982. Study findings revealed that: (1) the average student grade point average had risen and fallen in direct relationship to changes in grading policy instituted at the college; (2) the proportion of full- and part-time students who persisted beyond their first year had increased since the late 1970's; (3) the average full-time student will accumulate 43.5 hours while attending WRHC for 4.5 semesters and 36.5% of these students will earn a degree or certificate; (4) the average part-time student will accumulate 17.5 hours and attend 3.5 semesters at WRHC, and 12% will earn a degree or certificate; (5) the proportion of students officially transferring credit hours from other colleges declined from 12% to 7.5% for full-time and from 12% to 7% for part-time students since the mid-1970's; and (6) the proportion of full-time students taking continuing education courses declined from 22% in the early 1970's to 13% in the late 1970's. (HB)

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LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS ENTERING HARPER COLLEGE, 1972-1982

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ABSTRACT

THIS STUDY FOLLOWED SAMPLES OF SUCCESSIVE CLASSES (1972-1982) OF 200 FULL-TIME AND 200 PART-TIME STUDENTS EACH YEAR IN A LONGITUDINAL MANNER. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY WAS TO PROVIDE SOME BASIC INSTITUTIONAL DATA ABOUT STUDENT PERFORMANCE OVER TIME. DATA WAS OBTAINED ON THEIR PERFORMANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT AT HARPER THROUGH ANALYSIS OF THE ACADEMIC RECORDS OF EACH OF THE STUDENTS SAMPLED.

OVER THE YEARS THE AVERAGE GRADE POINT OF A STUDENT HAS RISEN AND FALLEN IN DIRECT RELATIONSHIP TO CHANGES IN THE GRADING POLICY. PART-TIME STUDENTS EARN A HIGHER GPA THAN FULL-TIME STUDENTS PRIMARILY BECAUSE THEY ARE OLDER STUDENTS.

THERE DOES SEEM TO BE A SLIGHT TREND IN RECENT YEARS FOR HARPER STUDENTS TO PERSIST BEYOND THEIR FIRST YEAR. THE AVERAGE FULL-TIME STUDENTS WILL ACCUMULATE 43½ HOURS WHILE ATTENDING HARPER FOR 4½ SEMESTERS, AND 36½ PERCENT WILL EARN A DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE. THE AVERAGE PART-TIME STUDENT WILL ACCUMULATE 17½ HOURS AND ATTEND 3½ SEMESTERS AT HARPER, AND JUST UNDER TWELVE PERCENT OF THESE STUDENTS WILL ACHIEVE A DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE AT HARPER.

THERE SEEMS TO BE A TREND FOR FEWER STUDENTS TO TRANSFER THEIR CREDITS TO HARPER FROM OTHER COLLEGES ATTENDED. IT ALSO APPEARS THAT IN RECENT YEARS FEWER FULL-TIME STUDENTS EVER TAKE CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES. ALMOST ONE-FOURTH OF THE PART-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS ALSO TAKE CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES AND THIS IS UNCHANGED OVER THE YEARS. SIMILAR TO THE NATIONAL TRENDS, THE ACT COMPOSITE SCORES OF ENTERING STUDENTS HAVE BEEN DROPPING OVER THE YEARS EVEN THOUGH THEIR HIGH SCHOOL CLASS RANK HAS REMAINED CONSTANT.

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to follow samples of beginning full-time and part-time traditional credit students over a long period of time observing their performance and achievements at Harper College. This type of longitudinal study provides the answer to such questions as: What percentage of all full-time students starting at Harper will ever graduate or accumulate 36 hours of credit or attend four semesters or will take Continuing Education courses? The same questions can be answered about beginning part-time students. Other questions can also be answered such as their GPA, whether they have transferred into Harper, their age and their standing in their high school graduating class.

Population Surveyed

A random sample of 200 full-time and 200 part-time beginning traditional credit students has been gathered from the population of students entering each fall from 1967 to 1982. This report shows only students who have entered from fall of 1972 to fall of 1982.

Method Used

Transcript data have been gathered on all students in the target samples and the data analyzed.

Discussion of Results

There have been three policy decisions which have affected the grade point average of students over the years. The first occurred in 1972 when students were able to repeat failed courses and replace the old D or F with the new grade rather than just averaging it in. The second policy change came in 1974 and allowed faculty to give N grades rather than Fs to students who simply did not attend. The third policy change occurred in the fall of 1982 when the College dropped the N grade and allowed repeats of any course and replacements of highest grade regardless of original grade. The following table shows the average grade point of students in these three periods of time.

Student started as a:	1967-1971	Repeat and Replacement of Grade Policy Instituted 1972-1973	N Grade Instituted 1974-1981	N Grade Dropped 1982
Full-time Student	1.95	2.31	2.62	2.18
Part-time Student	2.25	2.29	2.71	2.30

This table shows that grade point average was affected drastically by the N grade policy. When it was instituted in 1974, GPA rose dramatically and when the use of N grades was stopped in the fall of 1982, GPA dropped dramatically. The repeat and grade replacement policy instituted in 1972 affected primarily full-time students who would stay around long enough to repeat courses and replace low grades.

Discussion of Results (continued)

There does seem to be a slight trend in recent years for Harper students to persist beyond their first year. For example, among students who started as full-time students in the mid '70s, 74½ percent returned to Harper after their first year. Since the last '70s, about 79 percent of starting full-time students have returned for their second year. Among part-time students, the trend is similar. In the early '70s, about 45½ percent of starting part-time students returned for a second year. Students starting part-time in the late '70s and later have returned for a second year at a 55.4 percent rate.

This trend in higher proportions of students returning to Harper for at least a second year has slightly affected the hours attempted and passed. For example, the average student beginning as a full-time student attempts 45 semester hours and passes 43½ semester hours. Students beginning since the late '70s have accumulated 1½ semester hours more than their earlier counterparts. Moreover, the average starting part-time student attempts 17½ semester hours and passes 17½ semester hours. Students starting since the late '70s have accumulated an average of three more semester hours than their earlier counterparts.

This trend cited in the previous paragraphs has not yet affected the average semesters attended or the percentage graduating. Students starting as full-time students attend an average of 4.6 semesters while 18.7 percent of them attend seven or more semesters. Among those starting as part-time students, the average number of semesters attended is 3.6 while 16.7 of these students attend seven or more semesters. Thus, the term "two-year college" does not seem too appropriate for community colleges when seen in this light.

Over the years about 36½ percent of all persons starting as full-time students will eventually achieve a degree or certificate at Harper. Among those starting as part-time students, the percentage dips to just under 12 percent. There seems to be no trend in these percentages over the years.

There seems to be a trend over the years of fewer students officially transferring credit hours from other colleges. In the mid '70s, about 12 percent of the full-time students transferred credit hours into Harper, but since then only about 7½ percent of the full-time students have transferred in credits. Moreover, in the early '70s, 12 percent of the part-time students transferred credits to Harper, but this dropped to 9 percent in the late '70s, and to 7 percent in the early '80s. Despite this trend, other studies have shown that about 35 percent of Harper's degree credit students had previously attended another college and this has been constant over the years. Thus in recent years it seems fewer students are taking advantage of transferring in credits from their previous college background.

It appears that among full-time students, fewer are taking continuing education courses. For example, just under 22 percent of those starting as full-time students in the early '70s, took continuing education courses and this percentage decreased to 15½ percent in the middle '70s, and in recent years it has fallen well below 13 percent. Almost one-fourth of the part-time degree credit students also take continuing education courses but in this case, there appears to be no trend over the years.

The average age of entering full-time students is 18½ and for entering part-time students it is just under 26. The average school rank for both full-time and part-time students is about the 62nd percentile. Consistent with nationwide trends, ACT scores of entering students have been falling over the years. In the early '70s, the mean ACT composite was 19.0 for both full-time and part-time students, but this has fallen to 17.7 in recent years for full-time students and even lower for part-time students.

Major Conclusions

Over the years the grade point average of a student has risen and fallen in direct relationship to changes in the grading policy. Part-time students earn a higher GPA than full-time students primarily because they are older students.

There does seem to be a slight trend in recent years for Harper students to persist beyond their first year. The average full-time student will accumulate 43½ hours while at Harper 4½ semesters, and 36½ percent will earn a degree or certificate. The average part-time student will accumulate 17½ hours and attend 3½ semesters at Harper, and just under 12 percent of these students will achieve a degree or certificate at Harper.

There seems to be a trend for fewer students to transfer their credits into Harper from other colleges attended. It also appears that in recent years fewer full-time students ever take continuing education courses. Almost one-fourth of the part-time degree credit students also take continuing education courses and that is unchanged over the years. Similar to the national trends, the ACT composite scores of entering students have been dropping over the years even though their high school class rank has remained constant.

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF FULL-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER

	Students Beginning in the Fall of:										
	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sample Size	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Withdrew before establishing a GPA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean GPA	2.33	2.29	2.60	2.63	2.64	2.65	2.73	2.62	2.55	2.54	2.18
Mean Cumulative Hours Attempted	44.76	43.16	46.45	43.66	43.42	46.02	46.99	44.47	46.60	40.59	24.35
Mean Cumulative Hours Passed	42.15	40.51	45.50	42.73	42.57	45.07	46.25	43.50	44.0	38.24	21.76
Percent Registered 1 year later	58.0	56.0	68.5	60.0	59.5	60.5	65.0	65.0	68.0	67.0	68.5
Percent not registered one year later but who return at another time	10.5	16.5	12.5	14.0	16.0	15.0	11.5	11.5	14.5	6.0	0
Percent who never return after first year	31.5	27.5	19.0	26.0	24.5	24.5	23.5	23.5	17.5	27.0	31.5
Average number of semesters registered	4.40	4.51	4.85	4.52	4.70	4.70	4.69	4.40	4.50	3.70	2.10
Percent Registering for:											
One Semester	8.0	8.5	5.0	7.0	4.5	4.5	6.0	5.5	4.5	4.0	**12.5**
Two Semesters	23.0	19.0	15.5	18.0	17.0	17.0	16.0	17.0	9.5	20.5	**61.0**
Three Semesters	10.0	13.0	10.5	13.5	17.5	14.5	8.0	11.5	13.5	13.5	**26.5**
Four Semesters	16.5	14.0	19.5	15.5	15.5	15.0	17.0	18.5	20.5	31.0	**0**
Five Semesters	13.5	15.0	14.5	16.0	18.5	16.0	19.5	19.0	21.5	24.0	**0**
Six Semesters	13.0	11.5	13.0	13.5	9.5	12.5	14	14.5	18.5	7.0	**0**
Seven or More Semesters	16.0	19.0	22.0	16.5	17.5	20.5	19.5	14.0	12.0	0	**0**

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF FULL-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER (continued)

	Students Beginning in the Fall of:										
	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Percent Passing:											
Under 24 hours, no degree	22.0	29.0	20.0	21.0	20.0	20.0	15.0	25.5	15.0	27.0	48.0
34-35 hours, no degree	22.5	16.5	17.5	22.5	25.5	20.0	20.0	15.5	20.5	22.0	48.5
36-47 hours, no degree	5.0	10.0	9.5	8.0	8.5	7.0	14.0	11.0	11.5	13.5	2.0
48 or more hours, no degree	9.5	9.0	14.0	12.0	16.5	13.5	15.5	13.0	25.5	22.0	0
48 or more hours, with degree	35.0	31.0	37.0	32.0	25.5	38.0	33.0	33.5	21.5	13.0	0
Less than 48 hours with degree	4.0	3.0	.5	3.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	.5	2.5	.5	0
Certificate only	2.0	1.5	1.5	1.5	3.0	.5	1.0	1.0	3.5	2.0	1.5
Percent transferring into Harper officially	13.0	12.0	9.5	14.0	6.5	9.0	7.0	5.5	11.5	7.0	6.5
Percent taking Continuing Education Courses	21.0	21.0	23.0	16.0	15.0	11.5	12.5	9.0	8.5	7.5	1.5
Percent taking degree credit courses first	20.5	20.0	21.5	14.0	12.0	9.0	8.5	7.5	7.5	4.5	1.5
Percent taking Continuing Education courses first	.5	1.0	.5	2.0	1.5	1.5	0	.5	.5	2.0	0
Percent taking them Simultaneously	0	0	1.0	0	1.5	1.0	4.0	1.0	.5	1.0	0
Mean Age	19.3	18.3	18.7	19.3	18.7	18.7	18.1	18.4	18.7	18.4	18.3
Sample Size Age	170	167	194	179	194	192	190	194	196	197	198
Mean High School Rank	49.0	58.4	62.0	59.5	63.1	63.8	63.7	63.0	64.9	59.4	57.9
Sample Size High School Rank	114	138	161	166	167	189	165	156	168	184	179
Mean ACT Composite	19.5	19.0	19.0	18.9	18.9	18.2	18.2	17.4	18.9	17.3	16.5
Sample Size ACT	61	113	47	111	55	110	46	43	88	125	111
Entire Entering College						18.3	17.6	17.8	17.5	17.4	17.4
ACT Composite						1194	2514	1354	1038	1509	2435

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF PART-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER

	Students Beginning in the Fall of:										
	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sample Size	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Withdrew before establishing a GPA	0	6	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean GPA	2.26	2.31	2.88	2.63	2.64	2.75	2.71	2.69	2.67	2.74	2.30
Mean Cumulative Hours Attempted	19.44	17.82	15.3	16.91	21.33	19.89	19.83	17.00	16.30	14.5	8.2
Mean Cumulative Hours Passed	17.39	16.25	14.9	16.29	20.23	19.37	18.95	16.15	14.80	13.1	6.8
Percent Registered 1 year later	29.0	31.0	32.0	32.0	39.0	36.5	43.5	41.5	37.5	40.5	39.0
Percent not registered one year later but who returned at another time	16.0	15.0	13.0	14.5	14.0	16.0	15.0	18.0	13.0	2.5	0
Percent who never returned after first year	55.0	54.0	55.0	53.5	47.0	47.5	41.5	40.5	49.5	57.0	61.0
Average number of semesters registered	3.52	3.30	3.33	3.60	3.90	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.40	2.60	1.60
Percent Registering for:											
One Semester	38.5	38.0	35.0	30.0	21.5	30.5	23.5	22.0	27.0	30.5	42.5
Two Semesters	20.0	19.5	25.0	24.0	28.5	21.0	21.5	23.0	22.0	22.5	57.0
Three Semesters	5.5	11.5	10.0	13.0	11.5	11.0	15.5	18.5	15.5	17.5	.5
Four Semesters	5.5	8.5	5.5	6.5	9.5	8.5	10.5	8.5	12.0	15.5	0
Five Semesters	6.5	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.5	5.5	6.0	9.5	6.5	12.0	0
Six Semesters	6.5	5.0	5.0	4.5	8.0	4.0	9.0	8.0	8.0	2.0	0
Seven or More Semesters	17.5	13.5	15.5	17.5	16.5	19.5	14.0	10.5	9.0	0	0

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF PART-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER (continued)

	Students Beginning in the Fall of:										
	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Percent Passing:											
Under 12 hours, no degree	58.5	63.0	61.5	56.0	50.5	54.0	50.5	56.5	57.0	60.0	79.5
12-23 hours, no degree	12.5	14.5	14.5	21.5	20.5	19.0	21.0	18.0	21.0	23.0	18.5
24-35 hours, no degree	9.0	4.0	8.5	6.0	7.5	6.0	7.0	8.5	9.5	9.5	1.5
36-47 hours, no degree	3.0	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	9.0	5.0	4.5	5.0	0
48 hours or more, no degree	3.5	4.5	1.5	3.0	8.0	4.5	4.0	1.5	3.5	1.5	0
48 hours or more with degree	8.0	8.5	6.5	6.0	7.5	10.0	4.5	5.0	1.0	.5	0
Less than 48 hours with degree	1.0	1.5	4.0	1.5	1.5	2.0	1.5	2.5	1.0	0	0
Certificate Only	4.5	1.0	2.0	2.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	.5	.5
Percent transferring into Harper officially	10.0	11.5	14.5	9.0	9.0	10.5	6.5	11.0	7.0	7.5	7.5
Percent taking Continuing Education Courses	22.5	22.5	30.0	30.5	20.0	27.5	22.5	23.0	14.0	18.0	8.0
Percent taking degree credit courses first	20.5	19.5	17.5	21.0	16.0	10.5	18.5	14.5	8.0	8.0	6.0
Percent taking Continuing Education courses first	2.0	2.0	10.5	7.5	1.5	4.5	1.0	2.5	2.5	7.0	1.0
Percent taking them simultaneously	0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.5	12.5	3.0	6.0	3.5	3.0	2.0
Mean age	25.4	23.6	28.4	26.6	25.6	26.9	25.6	25.7	25.9	24.8	25.4
Sample Size Age	173	133	197	168	183	189	183	192	194	184	197
Mean High School Rank	32.4	60.6	65.0	60.7	62.5	66.3	65.2	63.2	60.6	63.4	62.4
Sample Size Rank	33	120	153	156	171	183	155	144	148	164	170
Mean ACT Composite	18.8	19.0	20.3	17.4	15.4	17.3	16.3	16.2	14.5	15.8	15.0
Sample Size ACT	13	26	3	22	12	29	14	9	21	39	27

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